

when we have hundreds of thousands of people displaced? Are we really going to cut student loans when we have a whole group of colleges that have been wiped out? Are we really going to cut food stamps when every night we can see on television what is happening to people who have lost everything? Are we going to say to them, Sorry, there is no help for you because we had a plan, a reconciliation plan up in Washington, and we had to stick to it? Is that really going to be the answer? I hope not because the facts have changed. The facts have changed, and the facts require that we change. The facts require that the plan changes, and the facts require we have a new plan and a new approach.

I submit to my colleagues this is not the time to cut assistance for those who are the least among us and to cut taxes for those who are the wealthiest among us. This is a time for all of us to come together as a nation and respond to this disaster with a generous heart. That is my belief of what is required of us at this moment. That is the moral imperative at this moment—to respond to this disaster, to help those in need, to assist in the rebuilding, to help the sick, to feed the hungry. Goodness knows, we can see on our television screens every moment of every day that there are tens of thousands of our fellow citizens who deserve a helping hand. The notion that we just go forward with the plan as written makes absolutely no sense.

Here are the images. We can all see them. Here are the homes flooded—an absolute unmitigated disaster.

I have been asked by the news media about an incident that occurred in 2002 before the Senate Budget Committee. I want a chance to review that for the record. I have been asked repeatedly about a series of questions that I asked in 2002 of Mr. Parker.

I asked a question in a Budget Committee hearing on February 26, 2002, of one of the witnesses, Mr. Mike Parker, the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works. He said at that hearing:

If the corps is limited in what it does for the American people, we will see a negative impact on the people of this country.

He was talking in testimony that he provided the Budget Committee and in response to a series of questions that I asked him.

Here is how that conversation went. Assistant Secretary Parker said: “That figure we came up with was around \$6.4 billion [for Army Corps funding] . . .”

I asked him:

That is what you requested?

Assistant Secretary PARKER: Yes.

My question back to him:

\$6.4 billion?

Assistant Secretary PARKER: Right.

Senator CONRAD: And you got, on a comparison basis, \$4 billion . . . Well, did you think \$4 billion was the right number to come to?

Assistant Secretary PARKER: No. I would have offered that number if I thought it was the right number.

In other words, what happened was I asked Assistant Secretary Parker if the amount of money being requested by the administration for the Army Corps of Engineers was sufficient to deal with the challenges they were facing. He told me, no, they were not sufficient, that they had estimated \$6.4 billion was needed, but the administration would only ask for \$4 billion. And that is after the previous year's budget was \$4.6 billion.

I also addressed questions to Lieutenant General Robert Flowers, Chief of Engineers for the Army Corps, who came to testify with Assistant Secretary Parker. Here is how that conversation went.

Let me ask you this. Last year, there was \$4.6 billion [in Army Corps funding]. The President cut that by \$600 million on a fair comparison basis to \$4 billion. What are the implications of those reductions? What will it mean? . . .

LTG Robert Flowers said:

With the budget as it stands, we would in fact have to terminate projects . . .

Senator CONRAD: So you would have no choice but to terminate contracts?

Lieutenant General FLOWERS: Yes, sir. That's correct . . .

Senator CONRAD: It doesn't sound like it makes much sense to me. Does it make much sense to you, General Flowers, knowing what those projects are? Would it make any sense to you to terminate these projects?

Lieutenant General FLOWERS: Sir, it doesn't.

Lieutenant General Flowers went on to say:

. . . I would submit that in combating the war on terrorism and providing homeland security, the work we do in maintaining strategic ports is very vital to the military effort as well as the economy, because 98 percent of our foreign commerce is seaborne.

My rejoinder:

. . . So this has got a security issue attached to it.

Lieutenant General Flowers:

Sir, I believe it does. We have traditionally, in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, I think, contributed to the national defense.

What happened in these exchanges is very clear. I asked Mr. Parker, the civilian head of the Corps of Engineers, if he was asking for enough money. He said he was not. He said the administration had sent up a request for \$4 billion. He determined what was needed was \$6.4 billion, but the administration would not allow him to make that request.

Because of that testimony, Mr. Parker was then fired by the administration. He lost his job.

Senator TRENT LOTT said:

“Mike Parker told the truth that the Corps of Engineers budget, as proposed, is insufficient,” said Senate Minority Leader Trent Lott.

Newspaper headlines on the firing of the Army Corps Chief in 2002 ran the gamut from the New York Times that said:

Official Forced to Step Down after Testifying on Budget Cut.

The Washington Post:

Corps of Engineers' Civilian Chief Ousted; Parker Resigns after Openly Questioning Bush's Proposed Spending Cuts.

The Wall Street Journal:

Head of Corps of Engineers is Forced Out after Criticizing Budget Cuts for Agency.

The Sun Herald of Biloxi, MS:

Parker Let Go as Army Corps Chief; Honesty Got Him Fired, Some Say.

The fact is, the funding for the Corps of Engineers was deficient to do the job necessary to protect New Orleans and other cities. It was clear at the time. It was testified to by the man who was the head of the Agency, and because he was honest and forthright in questions that I put to him, he was removed from his job.

That is the factual history of what occurred. And those who removed him because he was honest and forthright about the needs bear serious responsibility, I believe, for what has occurred.

All of us now have a special responsibility to reach out and assist those who have been devastated. It should never have happened. None of us can know if these funds had been forthcoming at the time that they were clearly needed, and that need was made clear by an appointee of this administration, who was then removed from his position because he said the funding was inadequate.

This calamity requires a response, and the notion that we stick with the plan I do not think will withstand much scrutiny. We are going to have to have a new plan, and as part of that plan we should not be cutting the least fortunate among us. We should not be cutting food stamps. We should not be cutting the other life lines, whether it is medical assistance or any of the other programs that are now in place to assist these people who have been so badly hurt.

I do not believe it makes any sense at this moment to cut the resources of the Federal Government when we already cannot come close to paying our bills.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Florida is recognized.

HURRICANE KATRINA

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I rise today to reach out to my colleagues in the Gulf States and to all of the residents of Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi. The devastation and destruction experienced by Florida's neighbors is like nothing this country has ever experienced from a natural disaster.

The great State of Florida has had its own recent struggles to recover not only from the four hurricanes we experienced last year but from two already this year, Dennis, which hit Florida's panhandle, and Katrina, which first made landfall in Miami and Dade County before making its way over the Gulf of Mexico to continue on its path of destruction. As Floridians, we all know well the pain and destruction wrought by hurricanes, and we feel a special kinship for our brothers and sisters in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. We have a great sense of duty to help

our neighbors through this difficult time, just as they so selflessly helped us during our time of need last year.

We, as a nation, have all begun to appreciate how fragile our very existence is in the face of this incredible force of nature. The loss of life and the scope of the destruction are beyond our capacity to understand. The feeling of isolation, despair, desolation experienced by those in the wake of a storm, and their families, is beyond consolation.

Having only too recently been the recipient of our own neighbors' good will, comfort, and support in the wake of our own struggles, Floridians stand ready to respond in kind. Today the news reports that over 25,000 evacuees are expected in central Florida, bringing it close to the point of strain on the local resources because of that kind of activity. Thousands of Floridians are already helping. More are asking how they can help. Citizens have contributed to numerous nonprofit groups that in turn are sending truckloads of supplies to hurricane-damaged areas.

Our National Guard troops are now stationed in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama, providing much needed manpower to the ongoing recovery efforts. Our law enforcement and fire department personnel have sacrificed time with their families so they can be in Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi providing emergency aid and security. Church groups have offered temporary housing, and schools in Florida have offered to take students displaced by the disaster.

I am proud of the way Floridians and all Americans have reached out in this great time of need for our country. We will continue to help our neighbors, continue to keep them in our prayers, and continue to mourn the loss of so many of our fellow Americans through such a powerful natural disaster.

While we certainly cannot avert our eyes and attention from the human suffering, we must also recognize the tremendous outpouring of love, support, and compassion directed to those who have lost so much. The American spirit of unity and survival is reflected in the response to the American Red Cross, the Office of Housing and Employment for the Displaced, the offer of neighboring public universities to accept students from Louisiana to avoid interruption in their education. These all serve to remind us that for all our differences, we are all one people, and we will take care of our own.

Many have raised legitimate concerns about the level of our preparedness as a nation for the disaster, but now is not the time for recrimination. The time for examination and for determining lessons learned will soon come, but for now we must not be distracted from the mission of delivering aid and comfort to those who so desperately are in need and we must begin the process of rebuilding.

The rise of rhetoric will not empty the flood waters, provide relief to the

living, bury the dead or rebuild our cities. Together we can begin to restore hope to those where hope has been lost. Together we must move forward in good faith as one nation.

As we look to the future, we have a responsibility to examine our disaster readiness at every level of Government. When lives are at stake, there is no room for territorial or jurisdictional turf wars. We must make certain no lives are lost that might otherwise be saved with proper planning, training, and cooperation among Government agencies at every level. I look forward to working with my colleagues in the Congress to be certain that that goal is achieved.

Our country has been through very challenging times. We have suffered through terrorist attacks on our homeland, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and most recently Hurricane Katrina and surging oil prices. Yet through all of this, the American people have moved forward with optimism and determination. It is our way. We are a resilient people. Because of the incredible resiliency of the American people, we will recover from Katrina and we will be stronger and we will be better.

HONORING CHIEF JUSTICE WILLIAM H. REHNQUIST

Mr. MARTINEZ. Mr. President, I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to say what a great loss our country has experienced with the passing of our Chief Justice William Rehnquist. William Rehnquist was a man of deep integrity and honor, a true public servant. He served our country well, always keeping an eye toward tradition and working to bring constitutional reason to the complex questions of our nation. Our country is better for the guiding hand he placed on the Court. His resolute spirit will be missed.

Chief Justice Rehnquist's leadership brought the Court through three decades of very tumultuous times. September 17 of this year would mark the 29th year of his tenure as Chief Justice. This term exceeds that of every other Chief Justice in our nation's history, with the exception of Chief Justice John Marshall, who served for 34 years.

He led the judiciary with resolve and a steady hand. He will be greatly missed by his family, his colleagues, the Court, and by a grateful nation.

As we turn our attention in the coming weeks to the confirmation process to consider the President's nominee to serve as the next Chief Justice, it would be appropriate to pause and reflect on the service to our country provided by this man of exceptional intellect who served his Nation long and faithfully.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. DAYTON. Mr. President, I join with my colleague, the distinguished Senator from Florida, in expressing my personal condolences and those of my

fellow Minnesotans to the family and friends of the former Chief Justice, and I share the sentiments in regard to his distinguished service to our nation.

HURRICANE KATRINA AND SOARING GAS PRICES

Mr. DAYTON. Mr. President, I also want to join with others of my colleagues today who have expressed the concerns, condolences, and sympathies to the victims of Hurricane Katrina, which has so horribly claimed so many of our fellow Americans' lives, families and friends, homes, businesses, farms, schools, and entire communities that are the worst victims of this unprecedented disaster. Our hearts go out to all of them. Our helping hands are being extended and must continue to be extended to them.

There are millions of other victims of this disaster, Americans nationwide whose economic well-being has been harmed by price increases and supply or service disruptions.

In my State of Minnesota, probably the worst economic damage and financial hardships have been caused by the skyrocketing prices for gasoline and other essential energy supplies. Even before Hurricane Katrina, those prices had been increasing sharply. In the 3 months from May 28 to August 28 of this year, the average price of regular unleaded gasoline throughout Minnesota has risen from \$1.92 a gallon to \$2.55 a gallon. That is an increase of 63 cents a gallon, a one-third increase in just 3 months.

Then, in 3 days last week, from August 29 to September 1, the average gasoline prices in Minnesota jumped another 46 cents a gallon, according to one Web site that has spot check reports from throughout the State. So in 3 months and 3 days, the average gasoline prices, according to this Web site, in Minnesota, jumped from \$1.92 a gallon to \$3.01 a gallon, a 57-percent increase. That is not as bad as some other parts of the country, but it is sure worse than bad enough for Minnesota.

I know from direct personal experience driving around northern Minnesota last week that actual prices were much higher, as high as \$3.46 a gallon for regular unleaded gasoline, which was up almost \$1 a gallon from 2 weeks before. Unfortunately, that up-to-date, accurate information is not available from the Energy Information Administration Web site, and that is one of the defects that needs to be remedied.

Most of Minnesota's oil and gasoline supplies originate from Canada, come in either by gasoline or oil pipelines and then refined within our State. So almost all of our price increases for gasoline and other energy products were not directly the result of Katrina's supply disruptions. Rather, they were the result of other people taking advantage of that disaster to take advantage of the people of Minnesota.